

# Elimination of Reduced Price Breakfast



## How Does the Elimination of Reduced Price Breakfasts Work?

Schools that eliminate reduced price breakfasts only offer their students two prices for breakfast – free and full price. Students that would typically qualify for the reduced price meal are able to receive their meal for free in this model. This works well in schools with high percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced price meals, but have low participation of reduced price students.

The school serves reimbursable breakfasts as it normally does. The only difference is that breakfast is offered at no charge to students who qualify for reduced price meals as well as those who qualify for free meals. Even though the school only uses two categories for charging students, the school still claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student.

Schools that eliminate reduced price breakfasts often see an increase in participation in the lunch program as well as in their breakfast program. The idea is that by saving the \$.30 at breakfast, a student is more likely to have \$.40 to buy lunch. Schools find that participation, and as a result, federal reimbursements, increase enough to cover the cost of serving breakfast to this group of students for free.

## Why Eliminate Reduced Price Breakfasts?

Most importantly, when you eliminate reduced price breakfasts, more students eat breakfast. Offering breakfast for free to students that qualify for reduced price meals removes any financial barrier that these students may experience. Students who qualify for reduced price meals pay up to \$.70 a day for breakfast and lunch. Assuming they pay \$.70 a day for meals, it costs a student about \$120 a year or \$19 a

month to eat breakfast and lunch at school. In a lower income family, this can add up. The more students who eat breakfast, the better their overall diet quality, attendance, tardiness, behavior and test scores will be. In addition, more revenue is generated from the federal government if more students eat breakfast.

## When Does Eliminating Reduced Price Breakfasts Work Best?

Eliminating reduced price breakfasts works particularly well in schools with low breakfast participation from reduced price students. Here are some other qualities where eliminating reduced price breakfasts are likely to be particularly successful:

- High free and reduced approval rate at a school
- The ability to keep food costs in check
- Additional staffing is not necessary to handle the increase in participation
- Staff are supportive of breakfast and realize its importance to learning
- Breakfast is easily accessible to students

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## Success Story:

<b>School:</b>	Elementary (K-5), Elementary (K-8), Middle School, High School
<b>District:</b>	Ladysmith-Hawkins School District
<b>Contact:</b>	Shelly Hayden, CDM, CFPP, Food Service Director 715-532-5531 x269 (SHayden@lhds.k12.wi.us)
<b>Enrollment:</b>	982
<b>Breakfast Participation Elementary:</b>	90%
<b>District Free/Reduced:</b>	45%
<b>District Lunch Participation:</b>	75%
<b>District Breakfast Participation:</b>	50%

Last year, Shelly noticed that participation in the School Breakfast Program was lower than she wanted. She knew that many families had multiple children in the school district and that they found it difficult to pay reduced price fees for both breakfast and lunch. Around this same time, she heard about a policy that was being discussed statewide to eliminate the reduced price category for breakfast and serve these students for free. After looking at her participation rates, she realized she had high participation in the students who qualified for free meals, but low participation in students qualifying for reduced meals. She decided to eliminate the reduced price category throughout her district.

Shelly checked over her participation numbers and budget carefully before implementing the program. By keeping food costs to a certain level the program would work, even though reduced price students were eating breakfast for free. At one school with a high free and

reduced approval percentage, all students can eat breakfast for free. Parents were told about the change in policy at the beginning of the school year in an information letter on signing up for school meals.

At two schools breakfast is served in the classroom, while at the other two schools breakfast is served in the cafeteria. Shelly received a Herbert Kohl Breakfast Grant through DPI, which helped with the initial costs to implement breakfast in the classroom.

All four schools have seen an increase in student participation in breakfast. The breakfast menus have not changed because of eliminating the reduced price category and staffing has not been affected, even though more students are eating breakfast. Menus use prepackaged items such as cereal, bagels, cereal bars, yogurt and string cheese to accommodate eating in the classroom while still keeping labor to a minimum.

This school year, almost 4000 additional breakfasts have been served to reduced price students over last school year. Even though this resulted in lost revenue from students, because of increased participation, increased federal reimbursements and keeping food costs reasonable, Food Services has made money with the breakfast program this year. Shelly would not go back to how things were. She intends to continue to eliminate the reduced price category to ensure that students have access to a healthy breakfast to start their day.